



# Investigating Test Security Issues

# Purpose of Today's Session

## **Presenter:**

Julie Cole, Director of Policy and Publications  
Student Assessment Division, Texas Education Agency

## **Objective:**

To outline the most appropriate actions to take when investigating a test security issue in a school district

## **Agenda:**

- Oaths of Test Security and Confidentiality
- Types of Testing Irregularities
- Investigating and Reporting Serious Testing Violations
- Penalties for Serious Testing Violations

# Test Security Section in DCCR

The test security section includes the following pages

- Test security and confidentiality
- Testing irregularities
- Investigating and reporting testing irregularities
- Penalties for violating security and confidentiality of assessments
- Things to consider before, during, and after an administration
- Security forms







# Oaths of Test Security and Confidentiality

# Oaths of Test Security and Confidentiality



- The superintendent and district coordinator oaths are each two-part online forms that can be accessed and submitted within TIDE under *Administration and Security Forms*.



- Each district or charter school is required to have these **four** documents submitted prior to July 31, 2022, regardless of staffing changes.

- **Superintendent Part I**

- **Superintendent Part II**

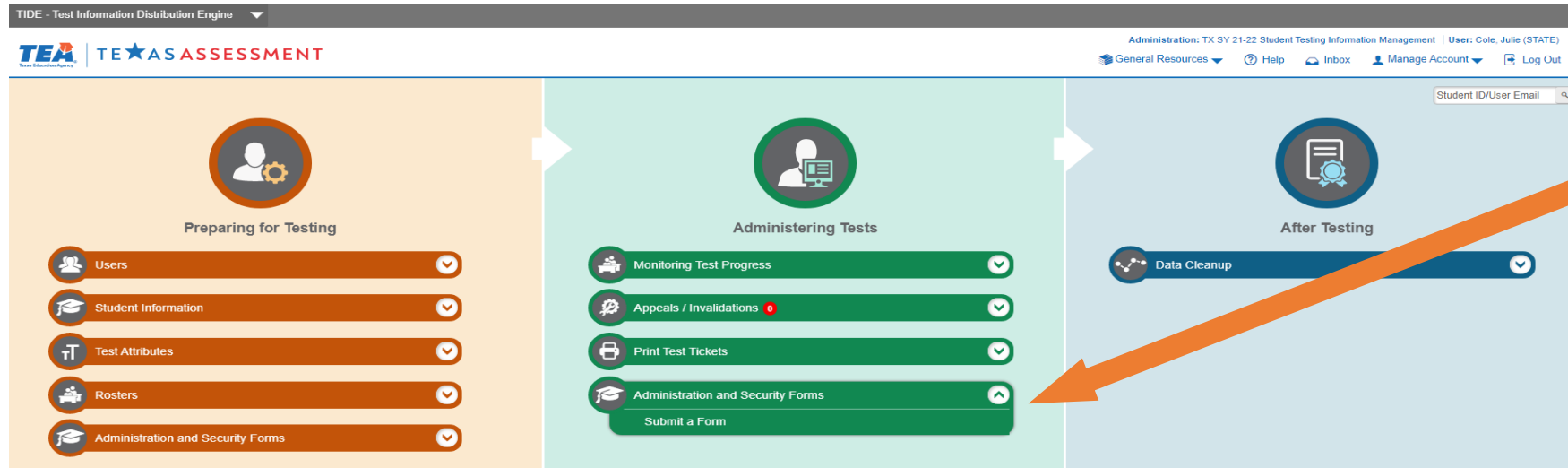
- **District Testing Coordinator Part I**

- **District Testing Coordinator Part II**

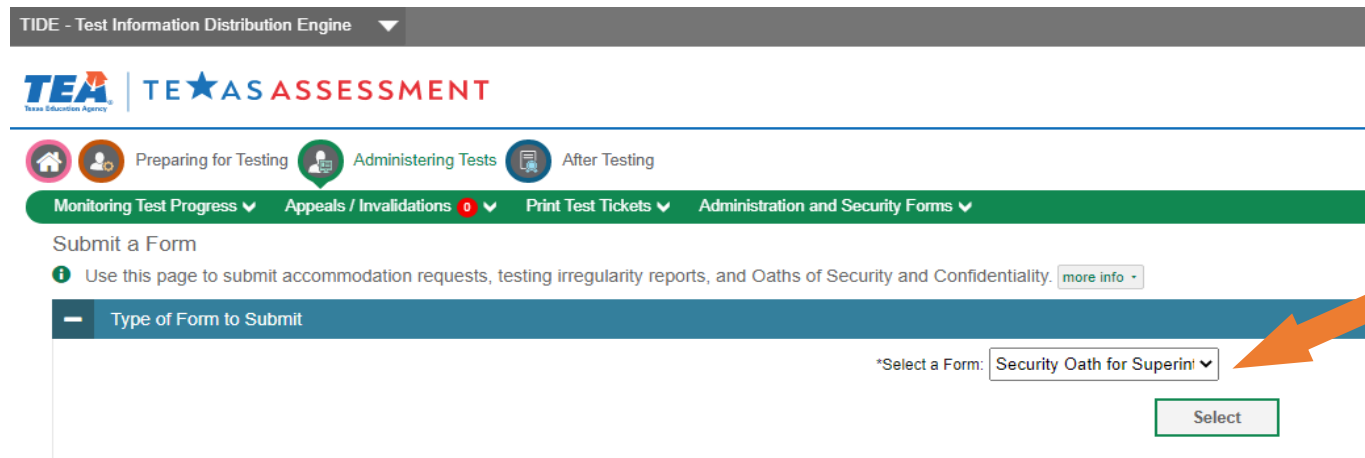


- For questions about returning the signed security oaths for this year, or confirmation of receipt, contact Cambium.

# Oaths of Test Security and Confidentiality (cont.)



- In TIDE under *Administration and Security Forms*, select *Submit a Form* from the drop-down menu.



- On the next page, select which form you want from the drop-down menu, for example, *Security Oath for Superintendent*.

# Two Part Test Security Oaths

- For the Superintendent and Chief Administrative Officer:
  - Part I is required to be submitted prior to the administration of the first state assessment for the school year.
  - Part II is required to be submitted after all state testing has been completed for the school year.
- For the District Testing Coordinator:
  - Part I is required to be submitted after receiving training (if applicable) and before handling secure test materials.
  - Part II is required to be submitted after all state testing has been completed for the school year, and all materials have been returned to the state testing contractors.

# General Oath of Test Security



- The general oath should be completed by all other school personnel who participate in state-mandated testing or handle secure test materials.
- It is a fillable PDF in the DCCR that can be printed or saved electronically.
- It is required to be completed after receiving training (if applicable) and before handling secure test materials.
- A certified staff member must be identified who will be responsible for each noncertified participant.





## Types of Testing Irregularities

# Procedural Testing Irregularities

- Procedural testing irregularities are less severe, more common, and typically the result of minor deviations from testing procedures.
- You need to determine which type of procedural irregularity it is:
  - Accommodation errors
  - Accounting errors
  - Eligibility errors
  - Monitoring errors
  - Training errors
- Submit a procedural testing irregularity report form that includes:
  - A summary of events
  - A plan of action



# Accommodation Errors

Examples include:

- A student was provided an unallowable accommodation.
- A student, not approved for an accommodation, was provided the accommodation.
- An allowable and approved accommodation was not provided to a student.
- An allowable and approved accommodation was not properly administered or applied.
- The district failed to get the required TEA approval for an accommodation.

# Accounting Errors

Examples include:

- A student was issued test materials (e.g., test booklet, answer document, or test ticket) belonging to another student.
- A student's responses, holistic ratings, or observable behavior rating were submitted incorrectly (e.g., wrong subject or domain, wrong student).
- Testing personnel lost or misplaced test booklet(s), answer document(s), or other secure test materials.
- Secure test materials were left unattended or secure online assessments were left visible.
- Students' test results or test performance was improperly shared (i.e., FERPA violation).

# Eligibility Errors

Examples include:

- A student was administered an incorrect test (e.g., wrong grade level, wrong language, wrong version).
- An eligible student was not administered a test (e.g., EL whose parents waived district ESL services was not administered the assessment).
- An ineligible student was incorrectly administered a test (e.g., a student who has completed only the first part of U.S. History was administered the STAAR EOC assessment).
- The district failed to submit student responses, holistic ratings, or observable behaviors ratings.
- The district failed to properly account for all eligible testers.



# Monitoring Errors

Examples include:

- A test administrator
  - left room unmonitored during testing;
  - did not monitor students during break;
  - reinforced test-taking strategies;
  - did not properly prepare testing environment or device for testing;
  - did not use test administrator manual or read "SAY" directions;
  - did not complete required seating chart; or
  - did not give students correct amount of time to complete the test (i.e., too much, too little).
- A test administrator did not actively monitor students and did not
  - detect when student went back or went ahead to work on different test;
  - ensure that students worked independently;
  - prevent students from using cell phones to take pictures, post, or send messages;
  - verify that students recorded their responses and accepted blank answer documents; or
  - confirm that students submitted online tests.

# Training Errors



Examples include:

- Personnel were permitted to administer tests, monitor test sessions, relieve a test administrator during a break, or handle secure materials even though they were not properly trained (at least once) or did not sign the appropriate test security oath.
- Raters for TELPAS did not follow proper training or calibration procedures.

# Serious Violations of Test Security

- Directly or indirectly assisting students with responses to test questions
- Tampering with student responses
- Falsifying holistic ratings or student responses
- Viewing secure test content before, during, or after an administration unless specifically authorized by TEA
- Discussing or disclosing secure test content or student responses
- Scoring student tests, either formally or informally
- Duplicating, recording, or electronically capturing confidential test content unless specifically authorized by TEA
- Responding to secure test questions
- Fraudulently exempting or preventing a student from participating in the administration of a required state assessment
- Receiving or providing unallowable assistance during calibration activities (e.g., taking notes or sharing answers)
- Encouraging or assisting an individual to engage in the conduct described in the items listed above or in any other serious violation of security and confidentiality
- Failing to report to an appropriate authority that an individual has engaged in or is suspected of engaging in conduct described in the items listed above or in any other serious violation of security and confidentiality
- Failing to implement sufficient procedures to prevent student cheating
- Failing to implement sufficient procedures to prevent alteration of test documents by anyone other than the student

A group of students are walking up a wide staircase in a modern school building. The students are wearing backpacks and casual clothing. One student in the foreground is wearing a red sweatshirt with 'TIGERS' written on it. The background shows large windows and a bright, airy atmosphere.

# Investigating and Reporting Serious Testing Violations

## For Serious Testing Violations, Districts...



- Must notify TEA as soon as possible of any alleged or suspected serious violation.



- Are required to conduct a prompt investigation so that
  - All necessary evidence is gathered and
  - Individuals involved are interviewed.



- Must submit a Serious Testing Violation form and required documentation **within 10 days**.



# Investigating Serious Testing Violations

- Determine whether state-mandated testing procedures were violated. Indicate this in your report.
- Determine exactly what happened, why it happened, and how it was discovered.
- Prepare a timeline to establish when events occurred.
- Obtain separate, typed, signed, and dated statements from all individuals who were involved in or may have information about the incident.
- Obtain statements from all students who were involved in or may have information about the incident.



## Investigating Serious Testing Violations (cont.)

- Determine who is responsible for the serious testing violation. The individual implicated in a serious violation should be informed of the allegations being made and asked to respond directly to all accusations in writing.
- Address and resolve any discrepancies that may exist in the information provided by the individuals involved. For example,
  - She said it happened on Tuesday; he said it happened on Wednesday. Determine when it really happened?
  - One document indicates there were 12 students involved; a different document indicates there were 15 students involved. Determine how many students were really involved.
- Determine if the testing violation compromised the validity of the students' assessments and the students' tests should be invalidated. If students were given an unfair advantage, their tests should be invalidated.

# Summary of Events for a Testing Incident

For both serious violations and procedural irregularities, the summary must include:

- At which campus the incident occurred and during which administration (i.e., month, year, program, grade level/subject area, course or domain, etc.)
- A district summary of the investigation detailing
  - what happened
  - the sequence of events
  - why it happened
  - how the error was addressed, remedied, or resolved
  - a determination of who was responsible for the error
- TEA contact, if applicable



# Statements from Educators Involved in Testing Incident

- Obtain separate, typed, signed, and dated statements from all individuals who were involved in or may have information about the incident.



- Verify that each statement includes:
  - name, title, contact information, and role during testing;
  - how individual was responsible for or involved in incident;
  - description of incident from individual's perspective;
  - individual's signature; and
  - date the statement was signed.
- Individuals implicated in a serious violation should be informed of the allegations being made and asked to respond directly to all accusations.

# Statements from Students Involved in Testing Incident

- Obtain statements from any students who were involved in or may have information about the incident.
- Do not interview a sample of students involved; interview ALL students involved.
- Students' statements may be handwritten or recorded and transcribed.
- Do not provide ONLY a summary of students' interviews; this is not acceptable evidence.
- Be as consistent as possible with student interview: same or similar questions, same day, etc.





## Statements from Students Involved in Testing Incident (cont.)

- If the district records a student's statement, written consent from the student's parent must be obtained as required under the TEC, §26.009.
- Depending on the circumstances (e.g., tampering or assistance), TEA may grant permission for the district to interview students with their test materials. Contact TEA for further guidance.
- Maintain contact information for each student at the local level in case TEA requests it.

# Submitting a Serious Violation Report Form

- You will need to determine what type of serious violation occurred—tampering, assistance, or other.
- You need to submit:
  - A summary of events
  - A determination of who was responsible for the violation
  - Any disciplinary action taken against accused educator
  - A decision to score or invalidate students' tests
  - Typed, signed, and dated statements from individual involved (students and adults)
  - A copy of a signed test security oath for the accused individual
  - Contact information for the accused individual
  - The last four digits of the accused individual's social security number







# Penalties for Serious Testing Violations

# Penalties for Serious Test Violations

- Referring to SBEC for potential sanctions (e.g., a restriction, reprimand, suspension, or revocation) with a **minimum one-year suspension**
- Class C misdemeanor
- Invalidating student test results
- Lowering accreditation status or accountability rating
- Charter sanction or revocation





# Referrals to State Board of Educator Certification

Previously referred cases include:

- 1-year suspension for providing students direct and indirect assistance
- 1-year suspension for providing assistance during TELPAS calibration activities
- 2-year suspension for reviewing students' test responses, identifying incorrect answers, directing students to rework test items, and providing clues
- 2-year suspension for tampering with TELPAS writing collections and falsifying TELPAS ratings
- Revocation for helping students solve problems and using voice inflection and facial expressions during an oral administration
- Revocation of administrator certificate and suspension of teaching certificate for tampering with students' answer documents and changing answers.

# Questions?

For inquiries related to development and administration of state assessments please contact:

Student Assessment Help Desk

(512) 463-9536

<https://tea.Texas.gov/student.assessment/>

For inquiries related to reporting activities and data corrections please contact:

[performance.reporting@tea.texas.gov](mailto:performance.reporting@tea.texas.gov)

(512) 463-9704

Performance Reporting Division

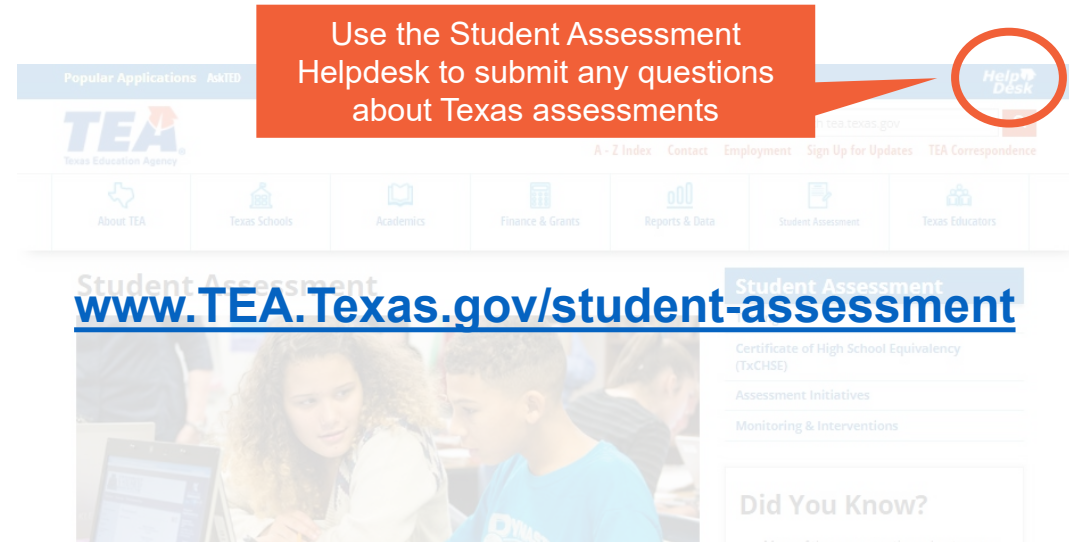
## THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMMITMENT TO TEXAS STUDENTS!



# Assessment resources and other helpful links can be found on the two pages linked below



- Access to all systems used for testing (e.g. TIDE, TDS, CRS, etc.)
- Access to trainings housed in the learning management system (LMS)
- District and Campus Coordinator Resources
- Practice and released tests
- Family portal for parents to view student scores and custom resources for their child



- General information about the Texas assessment program
- Information related to the STAAR redesign
- Information about TEA's optional assessment programs, including STAAR Interim Assessments and the Texas Formative Assessment Resource (TFAR)

# Texas educators are key to designing and building high quality assessments

Classroom teachers, instructional coaches, campus and district content specialists, and campus administrators can serve in a variety of ways:

- **Educator passage review** – each potential passage for the RLA test is reviewed and approved by a committee of Texas educators
- **Educator item review** – each potential question for a state test is reviewed and approved by a committee of Texas educators
- **Constructed response rangefinding** – educators are convened to set the scoring boundaries for student essays based on the rubric
- **Subject-area advisory groups** – groups of educators are convened to provide feedback on subject-area-specific topics
- **STAAR redesign focus groups** – groups of educators are convened to provide input on components of the STAAR redesign that are under consideration

Visit the [Texas Assessment Learning Management System](#) to apply

# Julie Cole, Director of Policy and Publications

Please submit any additional questions about this presentation via the [Student Assessment Help Desk](#).

Scan to provide feedback  
about this session



TE★AS ASSESSMENT